

Proclamation 6181 of September 20, 1990

Religious Freedom Week, 1990

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Many of the first colonists to settle in this country during the 17th century were driven by their desire to worship God freely, without fear of persecution. Devout in their faith and determined to enjoy the freedom denied to them in the lands of their birth, they braved the vast uncharted waters of the Atlantic in cramped wooden vessels and sought refuge in the New World. These early settlers were members of many different religious groups, yet all yearned for freedom and tolerance. Thus, by the time our Nation's Founders framed our Constitution and Bill of Rights, a unique tradition of religious liberty had already taken root in America.

Our Constitution provides that "no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States." However, the most celebrated guarantee of religious liberty in U.S. law is contained in the First Amendment to the Constitution. It states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

For well over 200 years, we Americans have maintained that religious freedom is not bestowed by government; rather, religious freedom is an inherent and unalienable right that not only precedes the social contract of government but also imposes a fundamental limitation on government power. Ten years before the delegates to the Federal Convention framed our Constitution, in his draft Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom in Virginia, Thomas Jefferson eloquently expressed this belief:

Almighty God hath created the mind free, and manifested His supreme will that free it shall remain by making it altogether insusceptible of restraint; that all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burthens . . . are a departure from the plan of the Holy Author of our religion, who being Lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was in His Almighty power to do. . . .

Thus recognizing Man's free will as both the design and gift of the Creator, the members of the Virginia House of Delegates affirmed the view of religious liberty as an inherent and unalienable right and guaranteed "that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no [way] diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities."

Throughout our Nation's history, the free exercise of religion has not only enriched the lives of individual believers but also strengthened the moral fabric of our society. The American people's faith in God, free from the weight of government oppression and interference, has shaped our Nation's most cherished values and institutions. It has also inspired our efforts to defend the cause of freedom and justice, both here at home and around the world.

In 1807, during his second term as President, Thomas Jefferson observed: "Among the most inestimable of our blessings is that . . . of liberty to worship our Creator in the way we think most agreeable to His will; a liberty deemed in other countries incompatible with good

government and yet proved by our experience to be its best support." This week, we celebrate the enduring truth of his words.

In recognition of the importance of religious freedom and the spirit of tolerance in our society, the Congress, by Senate Joint Resolution 331, has designated the week beginning September 23, 1990, as "Religious Freedom Week" and has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this week.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE BUSH, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week of September 23 through September 29, 1990, as Religious Freedom Week. I urge all Americans to observe this week with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twentieth day of September, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fifteenth.

GEORGE BUSH

Proclamation 6182 of September 20, 1990

National Teacher Appreciation Day, 1990

*By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation*

The United States is currently engaged in a nationwide effort to restore excellence to our educational system. Today more and more parents, educators, and elected officials are determined to set high standards for our schools and to meet them. Recognizing the importance of learning, not only in and of itself, but also as a means of maintaining the Nation's strength and productivity in an increasingly competitive world, we have established ambitious national education goals for the year 2000. If we are to succeed, we must reaffirm our support for a group of men and women who are working hard to achieve these goals—our Nation's teachers.

Education is a lifelong process of learning and discovery that begins in a child's home and extends through years of schooling and experience. On this National Teacher Appreciation Day, we honor teachers for their unique and important role in advancing our children's education. By helping their students to grow in knowledge, skill, and reasoning ability, teachers not only open the doors of opportunity for them but also help them to become responsible, productive citizens. In this way, the dedicated men and women who educate our Nation's youth also help to shape the future of the United States. That is why their work is so important to all of us.

Whether they work in the traditional academic setting, vocational training, continuing education, or special education, teachers influence both the personal and the intellectual development of their students. Indeed, teachers who convey a genuine commitment to excellence—as well as respect for authority and a sense of responsibility and concern